

November 23, 2016



HOLIDAY CHEER IN THE DARKEST DAYS OF THE YEAR!

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In Canada, as in many other countries that aren't close to the equator, the days of winter are dark late in the morning and dark early in the evening. Along with blustery cold winds, snow, and sometimes icy roads to ride on to the stores it makes Holiday Cheer harder to believe in.

This time of year, when the retailers are geared up for their best sales ever, including at least one Black Friday, there are issues that don't come any other time of year. While the darkness of the days and the low sun in the sky may motivate shoppers to stay in side and shop on line, sooner or later they remember something they need and will rush out to shop.

Your store can light the way with a great invitation to come into your store for Holiday Cheer.

BEGIN OUTSIDE

All the traditional trappings and symbols of Christmas are what shoppers love to encounter. As much as you can place things like:

1. Wreaths on your door or in your windows extra large so they can be seen at a distance.
2. Pots with twigs or evergreen each side of the entrance to your store.
3. Twinkle lights anywhere, especially if they are twinkling as this will catch the most attention from a distance.
4. OPEN sign and Holiday Hours of operation.
5. SIGNS... either sandwich board signs on the sidewalk, if you are allowed or signs inside your windows to tell shoppers what you offer for the season:
 - a. Inform (FREE Gift Wrapping – Hot Chocolate While You Wait)
 - b. Direct (MORE parking one block North)
 - c. Promote (Two for One on XCYZ until end of year!)
6. Light! Step outside in the dark evening hours and see the effects of the lighting in your store. The darker it is outside, the more can be seen inside when going by. What impression and invitation is your store giving?

Is your eye jumping to a bright fluorescent light and not appreciating all the displays and products on fixtures? Make baffles for those lights! It can be as simple as taping a 'valance' made out of cardboard around the light to keep the glare from the shopper's eyes!

INSIDE HOLIDAY CHEER

The atmosphere you create inside the store that begins with the music, and fragrance that is a delicate cranberry, cinnamon, or evergreen, aids in creating the holiday cheer.

Providing a place for shoppers to hang their bulky winter coats, gloves, and scarves and other parcels they have accumulated along your street is the BEST

way to cheer up a shopper and keep them in your store longer! This has to be a place behind your till where they feel they will be safe.

If your store is large enough for a few mini *shopping carts*, you can offer these to the shopper so they can remove their outerwear and also have a safe place to carry their other packages and handbags. Most shoppers stop once they have all they can carry and they need both hands free in your store to handle and inspect the details of your products. Make it super easy for them.

Gift wrapping, or even offering nice gift bags, tissue and seals is also something that will offer Holiday Cheer to the busy, time crunched shopper. You can charge a small fee that would cover your costs, or offer it FREE if it's in your advertising PR budget to do so.

Having a comfortable place to sit down, even a stool by the till, is a way to let a weary shopper feel refreshed and renewed to keep shopping. Offering hot chocolate, apple cider, coffee and even non-sticky cookies, or mints, is another way to create some holiday cheer. They may not accept for various reasons, but they will appreciate the gesture.

Charity Donation Box: Sometimes if they don't see anything in your store that appeals to them, but they feel favor towards you because of your disposition, positive attitudes, and friendliness, they may leave a small donation for a charity the community supports. This adds a lot of holiday cheer to the Christmas Spirit of giving.

Last but not least is the Holiday Cheer that comes from YOU and YOUR STAFF! Your smiles, your graciousness, your willingness to help them find the perfect gifts in their budget, AND explain product knowledge, as well as, your return policy will have a lot of profit well into the New Year and beyond!

